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The Cambridge History of American Literature. Edited by WILLIAM P. TRENT, JOHN ERSKINE, STUART P. SHERMAN, and CARL VAN DOREN. Volumes III. and IV. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons; Cambridge, England: University Press. 1921. Pp. x, 424; vi, 425-872. \$5.00 each.)

THESE volumes cover mainly the last half-century of American literature. Less than half of the chapters deal with literature in the narrower sense of the word—Mark Twain, minor humorists, later poets, essayists, and novelists, the drama, patriotic songs and hymns, ballads, and writings in German, French, Yiddish, and Indian; the other chapters are upon travels, history, theology, philosophy, magazines and newspapers, political writings, Lincoln, education, economics, scholarship, popular bibles, book publishing, and the English language in America. This second group not only increases the value of the work as a record of American culture, but also contains some of the most interesting material. The first group, on the other hand, has historical as well as literary significance, presenting the literature in its relations to the life of the times.

The chapter on Mark Twain portrays him justly as a writer of original and versatile gifts, who pictured with much power certain phases of American life and temperament; but it sensibly resists a present tendency to put him among the world's "literary Titans" in native endowment. The critic deals too gently, perhaps, with Twain's crass blindness to some of the finest things in the culture of the past, and makes too little of the agnostic pessimism which found imaginative expression in his posthumous story, *The Mysterious Stranger*. Howells is truly said to have "produced in his fourscore books the most considerable transcript of American life yet made by one man", although his typically American realism is well described as "a kind of selective realism", the novelist "choosing his material as a sage chooses his words, decently"; due emphasis is also laid upon his preference for the commonplaces of life, and the writer hints that in spite of Howells's neat style and true pictures of contemporary conditions his work may fail of full permanence because it has neither supreme fineness nor supreme power. The treatment of Henry James, although marred by sudden drops in style, as a whole is well poised and penetrating; it admits the faults of his later manner, but insists upon the truth and subtlety of his insight, and, while granting his debt to Europe, picks out as a distinctive quality that he not only portrays American types but unites "new-world faith and old-world culture". The pages given to minor authors and movements also combine study of literary art with study of historical and social setting. Thus the treatment of the drama since 1860 dwells upon the rise of plays American in subject and spirit, and upon the struggle between commercialism and art for control of the theatre, ending with a hopeful view of

the effect of recent amateur play-writing and acting upon the future of American drama. The chapter on Oral Literature gives a broad view, but with some detail, of the fortunes of English and Scottish ballads in the United States, and sketches briefly the making of new ballads by cowboys and others. The last chapter, on Indian oratory and poems, embodies the results of modern research, and shows fine artistic feeling in tracing the mode by which primitive poetry develops.

Among the chapters on subjects not purely literary, that on American English is one of the best; temperate and judicial in tone, yet giving occasional keen thrusts, the writer argues for recognition of the American form of English as one of several varieties due to sociological conditions, like Scottish English and South-England English, while urging reasonable restraint of extremes in pronunciation and idiom in North, South, and West. The development of magazines and newspapers is admirably told in two chapters which fearlessly point out the growth of debasing elements but duly appraise the relation of these publications to modern life and literature. The chapter on Lincoln, like that on Webster in volume II., is chiefly a study of style; and although it is a far more vital study, relating Lincoln's style, early, middle, and late, to the unfolding of his personality, one must regret that somewhere in the volume there is not an adequate presentation of Lincoln's political thought as expressed in his writings. The treatment of historians, theologians, philosophers, economists, and political writers, although necessarily brief, is fair in its exposition of the characteristics of various schools. The chapter on Scholars gives vivid glimpses into the personalities of Ticknor, Whitney, Gildersleeve, Child, White, and other students of ancient and modern languages and literatures, in addition to succinct but definite accounts of their work. The bibliographies are very full and valuable, as in the previous volumes, filling nearly 200 pages; and the name-and-title index to the two volumes (which are really one, divided for convenience in handling) occupies forty-four pages.

In spite of defects of method and execution in these volumes and their predecessors, it would be ungenerous, upon a survey of the now completed task, not to express agreement with the modest belief uttered by the editors in their last preface, "that the work as a whole furnishes a new and important basis for the understanding of American life and culture".

WALTER C. BRONSON.

A History of the Transport Service: Adventures and Experiences of United States Transports and Cruisers in the World War. By Vice-Admiral ALBERT GLEAVES, U. S. N., Commander of Convoy Operations in the Atlantic, 1917-1919. (New York: George H. Doran Company. 1921. Pp. xviii, 284. \$6.00.)

EVERYTHING in this excellent and stirring account of the manner in